ORM Corner

Information for Continual Improvement

What are we doing right? Much of what you read about safety usually focuses on mishaps, near-mishaps, and what our Sailors and Marines are doing wrong. As professionals, we need to continually improve the way we do business. As the articles in Approach *are meant to share experiences so others learn (the "There I was" concept you're familiar with), we also need to share practices that can prevent mishaps.*

From a Hornet community safety gram:

The following is taken from the commodore's comments: "The large increase in reported hypoxia events over the last six months is cause for great concern. Thanks in part to aggressive hazrep reporting, we have taken steps to improve the maintenance procedures and reliability of the OBOGS system. If equipped, the OBOGS system must be bit checked before every flight. If you must take off your mask to take a drink, make sure sure a check of the cabin altitude is part of the process. Suspected wingman hypoxia shall be incorporated into CRM training. Finally, if things just don't feel right, pull the green ring and descend to a safe altitude to sort things out."

From a USS *Shoup* (DDG-86) mishap-reduction-effort message:

Daily inspection of flight-deck nets and hardware, specifically retaining pins, are conducted to prevent the inadvertent lowering of nets, which can result in possible damage or loss in rough seas. A "rule of 20" (sum of rudder angle in degrees and speed in knots is less than 20) while flight-deck nets are down is used to prevent excessive rolls, which are hazardous to flight-deck equipment and personnel. Also, communication between flight-deck personnel and the bridge team is conducted before lowering nets. 1MC announcements inform the crew of ongoing evolutions and schedule changes.

From a safety survey at Naval Station Norfolk:

The VAW-121 Bluetails have a valuable tool available at the click of a mouse. The squadron ASO has assembled a library of VAW-community hazreps, arranged in an Excel spreadsheet with hyperlinks to the individual messages. The messages can be accessed by squadron members on the local intranet.

From HS-75 in a HS community ORM/safety gram:

"We have been seeing a decline in the quality of our daily-turnarounds (D-TAs). Pilots have noted obvious discrepancies on preflight. To fix this problem, we took two steps. First, we started having a second look (called a smoke-over) after we took the aircraft to the line. A plane captain different than the one who conducted the D-TA almost always does this second look. Second, we initiated a plane-captain-evaluation form. Both efforts have combined to improve the quality of our inspections."

From a VP-16 Orion safety gram:

"We must find ways to recognize and combat complacency. If curing complacency were easy, the Naval Safety Center already would have issued the solution. In an effort to prime the pump, here are a few discussion points:

"Think what-if. While we don't want to go around foretelling doom and gloom and suggesting the sky is falling, a certain amount of critical thought should accompany any evolution. Anticipating problems and shortfalls and rehearsing alternative courses of action is not paranoia; it is preparedness.

"Use ORM wisely. Operational risk management is a tool that may or may not help combat complacency; it depends on how the tool is used. If an evolution is approached with a comfortable, complacent attitude, it is unlikely risk factors will be identified and managed. However, if ORM is used as a method to step back and evaluate a task with a fresh set of eyes, then the ORM process should accomplish its intended purpose.

"Leadership and professionalism can provide a certain amount of insight or instinct to ferret out subtle complacency. While this ability may be more art than science, it certainly falls into the category of leadership. What we now call 'intrusive leadership' is simply recaging leadership to where it always should have been. As professionals, it is our job to anticipate problems, to ask the probing questions, to listen intently to what is said versus what we expect to hear, and to have the courage to act accordingly. Combating complacency sometimes requires directing action that seems like overkill or excessive preparation. Personal discipline and moral courage are required to hedge against a low-probability outcome. But that is the hallmark of leadership; the fact is that the tenets of responsibility and accountability demand such discipline from those privileged to exercise authority."